

**UNDERSTANDING INDIA 2: WHO IS AN INDIAN?**  
**ASSIGNMENT 2: CASTE AND CLASS (20% Weightage)**  
**DEADLINE: MARCH 11, 2020 (WEDNESDAY)**

**ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS**

1. The term 'caste' is foreign to all Indian languages. What is its linguistic root? When and how did it come to refer to birth-determined social stratification in India? What are the three indigenous concepts (in Indian languages) of social stratification that are today roughly translated as 'caste'? How do these three concepts differ from each other? **[10 marks]**
2. Louis Dumont and Babasaheb Ambedkar respectively argue that 'ritual purity/pollution' and 'graded inequality' are two central mechanisms that hold the caste in place as a *system*. What is meant by these concepts? In Viramma's account of caste in Karani village we find many mentions of cultural practices based on the principle of purity/pollution that indicate and substantiate the *jati* hierarchy of the village. What are some of these practices? Also, Viramma tells us that the Reddiar is the most powerful caste in Karani. But there are Brahmins in the village as well. Now, we know that Brahmins occupy the very top of the varna/jati system. How is it then that the Reddiar is the most powerful caste in the village? Conversely, Tombans occupy the bottom of the caste order. What determines their position with respect to other marginalized castes? Is it possible to figure out which one, caste or class, is more dominant in determining social hierarchy in Karani? Explain your answer. **[20 marks]**
3. With reference to Satish Deshpande's article, answer: how and under what historical circumstances, did 'reservations' emerge as the government's policy for the upliftment and empowerment of the "depressed classes" or SC/STs, as they later came to be called? How did the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report in 1989 affect the existing reservation policy? Finally, Deshpande argues that only members of upper castes have the privilege to project themselves as 'casteless.' How does he go about making this argument? How does the notion of 'caste capital' feature in the argument? **[20 marks]**

**NOTE:**

- YOU CAN USE THE ASSIGNED READINGS, CLASS LECTURES, AND ANY OTHER **CREDIBLE** SOURCE TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS
- PLEASE **DO NOT** TRY TO PASS OFF SOMEBODY ELSE'S THOUGHTS, IDEAS, AND WRITING AS YOUR OWN. THIS CONSTITUTES **PLAGIARISM** AND IS VERY EASY TO DETECT. I AM INTERESTED **ONLY** IN **YOUR AND ONLY YOUR** THOUGHTS AND WORDS. **YOU CAN**, OF COURSE, USE EXTERNAL SOURCES FOR YOUR ANSWERS. JUST MAKE SURE YOU **CITE YOUR SOURCES**—FOR QUOTES, IDEAS, AND DATA—PROPERLY.